



**CRASH ON THE STREETS**  
**ECONOMIC MELTDOWN AND CRUEL TORY EVICTION**  
**PLANS WILL FUEL GROWING HOMELESS CRISIS**  
**>>PAGES 10&11**



**TRESPASS, LAND**  
**AND CAPITALISM**  
**HOW THE RICH HAVE STOLEN**  
**OUR LAND >>PAGES 14&15**

# Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2719 | 26 August - 1 September 2020 | [socialistworker.co.uk](http://socialistworker.co.uk)

**SAY NO TO JOHNSON'S RETURN**  
**TO UNSAFE WORK AND SCHOOLS**

# TORIES

# PUT US

# ALL IN

# DANGER

**TIME FOR RESISTANCE**

**BRITAIN'S CORONAVIRUS CRISIS >>PAGES 3, 4&5**



## UNITED STATES

**New wave of**  
**anger hits out**  
**at killer cops**

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

**FURY AGAINST murder-**  
**ous police racism has burst**  
**onto the US streets after the**  
**shootings of two black men**  
**this week.**

Trayford Pellerin was murdered by the police last Friday in Lafayette, Louisiana. The state's American Civil Liberties Union condemned what it described as a "horrific and deadly incident of police violence".

Protesters in the city defied curfew and blocked the roads in response to his death.

And in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Jacob Blake was shot by the police in the back seven times at point-blank range. He was trying to enter his vehicle where his children,



Protesting at Trayford Pellerin's murder

aged three, five and eight, were seated in the back.

Blake was in a serious condition in hospital as Socialist Worker went to press.

The state's governor mobilised the National Guard in an effort to intimidate protesters off the streets. But they defiantly marched for justice.

"I am tired of being scared of the police killing me. Tonight they are going to listen," said one protester.

Three months since the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police triggered mass protests, the battle against racism continues.

**>>See page 5**



## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'I've had members of my association claiming Universal Credit and they're shocked by how low it is'**

Tory MP talks to the Economist

**'It's the phoniness of it all. It's the phoniness and this cruelty. Donald is cruel'**

Donald Trump's older sister Marianne Trump Barry

**'I'm not a big fan of sharks'**

Donald Trump gets lost in a speech while explaining why he won't give money to shark sanctuaries

**'He is obsessed with sharks. Terrified of sharks'**

Stormy Daniels in 2018. Trump denied it. She was paid £99,288 to keep her affair with Trump quiet during the last US election

**'Keir's got this exactly right. He's approached the government in a constructive way'**

Labour MP John McDonnell on Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer



# £563,000 to consultants for six weeks work on 'narrative'

CONSULTANTS MCKINSEY was paid more than half a million pounds by the British government for "six weeks of work" to decide the "vision, purpose and narrative" of a new public health authority in England.

A recently published contract shows that McKinsey was hired by the Department of Health and Social Care in May.

Its remit was to prepare a report on the options for a new body that would run the English test and trace coronavirus programme.

The consultancy firm was hired for £563,400 to submit a document that outlined the "mission and vision" of a proposed new organisation by the end of June.

The company worked with three members of the government's coronavirus response team, including Dido Harding, who will lead the new

agency. Harding is herself a former McKinsey consultant.

The contract was published before an announcement this week that Harding, the head of England's test and trace programme, had been appointed to run the new National Institute for Health Protection.

Harding worked at McKinsey for seven years until 1995 before taking on executive roles at companies including Thomas Cook and Tesco.

A Conservative peer, she was chief executive of telecoms group TalkTalk from 2010 until 2017.

She stepped down in the wake of anger about a damaging cyber attack on the company.

McKinsey said, "Our UK public sector work is contracted by government officials under existing public procurement rules."

DIDO HARDING worked for McKinsey

**NIGEL WRIGHT** who blackmailed Tesco by contaminating baby food with shards of metal is a former Conservative councillor and Ukip parliamentary candidate. He is now facing up to 14 years in jail for the plot. Wright represented Freshney ward on North East Lincolnshire Council in 2003. He was the youngest-ever chair of the Great Grimsby Conservative Association.

Tory blackmailer

**CHANCELLOR RISHI Sunak** is planning to ditch the "Facebook tax" on big tech companies after concluding that it is "more trouble than it is worth".

The Digital Services Tax, which came into effect last April, is likely to be axed. Sunak apparently concluded that the £500 million a year it is expected to raise isn't worth the downside of upsetting US president Donald Trump in trade talks.

## Doctors forced to stay after permit delay

SOME NHS doctors who have come to Britain from other countries have been unable to leave, threatened with eviction and had family members sacked.

This is because of delays in issuing new residence permits they were promised at the height of the pandemic.

The issue affects non-EU nationals—many who have spent months battling Covid-19.

The Home Office pledged on 31 March that it would automatically grant a year's extension to the visas of any NHS staff whose permission to stay expired before 1 October.

Priti Patel

The offer also covered the visas of their dependents.

Hospitals asked those affected to hand over their and their families' Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) ahead of their visa renewal date.

But, according to the Financial Times, months later they were still awaiting for some or all of the replacements.

## Bankrupt bosses cash in on the crash

COMPANIES across the US are awarding top executives multimillion-dollar "retention" bonuses shortly before declaring bankruptcy.

The practice has become commonplace among companies failing during the pandemic.

The list includes high profile collapses such as JC Penney, Hertz and Neiman Marcus.

Often, retention payments are granted weeks—or even days—before groups lay off workers.

Brad Holly, Whiting Petroleum's chief executive, received

Brad Holly

\$6.4 million—£5 million—at the end of March under a new compensation plan approved by the board of directors, which he chairs.

This was less than a week before the company filed for bankruptcy.

Holly will step down as chief executive soon and then receive \$2.53 million—£1.9 million—in severance pay.

## Illegal evictions on the rise

**NEW FIGURES** by Safer Renting reveals harassment and illegal evictions have almost tripled in parts of London's shadow rental market since the lockdown was imposed on 23 March.

This is despite emergency legislation banning landlords from evicting tenants (see pages 10 and 11).

"Criminal landlords are increasingly forcing tenants, who have lost their jobs or seen their hours cut during lockdown, out of their homes," says Roz Spencer, director of Safer Renting. "We regularly see tenants threatened or coming home to find

the locks changed and belongings dumped on the street."

Data from Citizens Advice show a 95 percent increase nationally in people asking for help with illegal evictions between the end of March and end of July, compared with the same period last year.

They were approached by 1,340 people in 2020, compared with 687 in 2019.

## Rape victim denied benefit

A WOMAN who was raped has been refused Universal Credit for her third child because she was sexually attacked in the "wrong" order.

She has been hit by the two-child limit on benefits—even though there is an exemption for children born of rape.

Regulations ban any extra Universal Credit for "third or subsequent" children born after April 2017. She had a child in 2010 after being raped.

She later had two more children, with her most recent child born last year.

In December her Universal Credit was increased by £463 over two months for the third child, under an exemption for children born to "rape, abuse or coercive control"

But Jobcentre officials then U-turned, stopped new payments and began clawing the money back—because the offence was a decade ago.

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# Tories plough ahead with unsafe return to schools

by ISABEL RINGROSE

**BORIS JOHNSON** this week reiterated his drive to get all children in England back to school full time next month.

Yet the Tories are refusing to put in place measures to make schools safer, such as smaller class sizes to enable social distancing.

A growing number of Covid-19 cases in Scottish schools shows the risks of fully reopening without such measures.

Initial plans would have seen a gradual return to full time education in Scotland. But just weeks before this was set to begin, the government announced that it expected “all pupils to be at school full time from 18 August”.

Schools across Scotland are now reporting cases of the virus. An entire primary school class and their teacher at St Albert's Primary School in Glasgow are self-isolating after a case of coronavirus. Eight pupils at Bannerman High School in Glasgow are also self-isolating.

Angela McCormick, a college teacher and EIS union member, told Socialist Worker that safety measures in other areas are not in place in schools. “You have to wear a face covering in all public areas,” she said. “If there is social distancing afforded to every other walk of life in Scotland, why not to school students and staff?”

## Distancing

Primary school pupils are not expected to be socially-distancing, but secondary schools are expected to encourage distancing between students. Personal protective equipment is not deemed necessary.

“They’ve taken a gamble with full time return with no masks or social-distancing,” Angela said.

Staff have been told to physically



A PROTEST over Tory schools plans in south east London earlier this year

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

distance from each other and one-way systems in corridors are being put in place.

However, an image from Clydebank High School of students crammed into a crowded corridor shows that such measures aren't enforced.

The Scottish government has tried to blame the spread of the virus on pupils and staff. It claims cases come from community clusters, rather than school-based clusters.

Angela said, “The government is blaming young people for mixing and going to parties. You can't be blaming young people when the government decided on a full return to education

without masks and social distancing. It's an absolute disgrace.”

In a daily briefing on Friday, Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon said there was a possibility the rules would change.

Yet she followed this by reiterating that there is no evidence coronavirus is being transmitted in schools.

## Cleaning

In Dundee, Kingspark School was shut for deep cleaning after eight adults connected to school tested positive for Covid-19.

By Monday, 17 teachers had tested positive alongside two students and three community contacts. A pupil

at a primary school in Inverness also tested positive. Despite a small number of pupils who had been in contact with the pupil, the school remains open.

Angela said, “The most important thing for them is to keep the wheels of industry turning. They will have to listen to pressure from teaching and support staff unions.”

Reopening schools without safe measures is a dangerous risk to staff, students, and their families.

## What's your story?

Email with your ideas  
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## Children transmit virus

A NEW study has cast doubt on Tory claims that children are less likely to transmit coronavirus. The Massachusetts General Hospital and Mass General Hospital for Children research found that children are silent spreaders of Covid-19.

Children had higher levels of the virus in their airways than adults who were hospitalised. A higher “viral load” means they are more contagious.

And although younger children have lower numbers of the virus receptor, this did not correlate with a

decreased viral load. Lead author of the study, Lael Yonker, said researchers found “high levels of virus in children of all ages”. And senior author Alessio Fasano added, “Kids are not immune from this infection. We should not discount children as potential spreaders for this virus.”

Researchers added that looking for symptoms isn't enough to stay safe as children can be asymptomatic but still contagious.

They said measures such as universal mask use and social distancing are vital.

Lael Yonker

## ECONOMY

### Bosses axe thousands more jobs

THE JOBS massacre continues across Britain, as does an almost total lack of response from union leaders. The Association of British Travel Agents (Abta) said on Monday that 39,000 people have already lost their job or been told their job is at risk.

The cuts amount to around 18 percent of travel industry jobs.

Marks & Spencer last week announced over 7,000 job cuts. It follows losses in a string of high street shops and restaurants, including Debenhams, John Lewis and Pizza Express.

The Tories have already begun winding down their furlough scheme, which pays some of the wages of workers who can't be in work. By the end of October

Not just cuts, M&S cuts

the scheme is set to be closed completely.

Simon French, chief economist at Panmure Gordon, said up to 1.5 million furloughed workers will “struggle to hold down jobs in the near term”.

Government figures show that the accommodation and food services sectors had the highest furlough rate of 77 percent.

Retail and wholesale furloughed the highest number of jobs—more than 1.9 million.

The jobs that remain may also be lower paid and with worse conditions. At M&S, shop staff with higher pay and pensions have been axed. Any vacancies will be in warehouses and online operations, with worse pay and conditions.

And since March, thousands more workers have moved to zero hours contracts, according to official figures.

More than one million workers are now on zero hours, a record high. **Sadie Robinson**

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# Infection rate soars, but number could be much higher

by YURI PRASAD

**IN A dangerous new sign of spreading infection, the numbers of people testing positive for the coronavirus in hospitals rose by more than a third last week.**

These “pillar 1” results, announced last Thursday, are collected only from people in NHS settings rather than in the wider community.

It is likely that many people testing positive in hospital are seeking medical attention because they are suffering more severe Covid-19 symptoms than those isolating at home.

Until recently, the weekly increase in infections had not resulted in any upswing in the numbers of people hospitalised—and England’s death toll has plateaued at a much lower rate than at the height of the pandemic in the spring.

It was widely assumed that this was because those getting the disease were younger and fitter than many of those who are most badly affected.

But the new figures suggest that increased “community spread” of the disease is now reaching those who are more vulnerable—including older people, and those with serious medical conditions.

Professor Paul Hunter from the University of East Anglia, said, “The fact that positive diagnoses have risen at a time when the number of tests are remaining fairly static does suggest that the incidence of Covid-19 in the community is now beginning to rise again.



Boris Johnson

“The additional sharp rise in pillar 1 tests being positive in particular supports this assumption.”

The news of a growing number of infections in hospitals was compounded by pillar two community testing which showed 27 percent week on week rise.

This increase came despite a 2 percent drop in the number of people being tested.

The government’s emergency Sage committee announced on Friday that its estimate for R, the reproduction number of the virus, had risen to between 0.9 and 1.1. The R figure represents the number of people each Covid-19 positive person goes on to infect.

While the R number varies across England, it is clear there are several hotspots where transmission of the virus has resulted in a growth in the number of infections.

The north west and south west of England appear to be badly affected, and there are many other town and city-wide trouble spots.

Recent NHS Test and Trace figures show in the country’s 20 worst-hit areas, Serco and Sitel—paid £200 million between them—reached only 54 percent of people who had been in close proximity to an infected person. That means more than 21,000 exposed people were not contacted.

In Bradford, 42 percent of exposed people were reached, with 3,691 of those potentially infected not traced.

These new figures show the dangerous complacency of the government’s drive to get everybody back to school and work next month—and the continuing farce of the system of contact tracing the Tories told us would be “world beating”.

AN NHS testing staff member collects a sample across the road from the Greencore sandwich factory

## Further workplace outbreaks are putting more lives at risk

A SANDWICH-MAKING factory where hundreds of workers tested positive for Covid-19 has—at last and far too late—been temporarily closed.

Workers at M&S supplier Greencore in Northampton will go into self-isolation. But it’s more than a week since it was confirmed that nearly 300 members of staff had tested positive for the virus.

After a campaign by the Bfawu food workers’ union, Greencore has been forced to say it will pay workers 80 percent of their basic pay if they have to self-isolate.

Meanwhile Covid-19 cases at the Bakkavor factory in Newark, Nottinghamshire have risen to over 75. The company makes desserts for Waitrose and Tesco. Richard Wiles, who works next to the site, told the BBC, “The workers have been upset for quite a while.

“They don’t think enough has been done to protect them.” “It seems cakes have come before Covid safety.”

Jonathan Gribbin, director of public health at Nottinghamshire County Council, said closing the factory “would be quite a radical thing to do, not something we would want at this point.”

There is one factory Bakkavor

2 Sisters factory in Coupar Angus

is closing. It has announced that salad factory in Alresford, Hampshire, is to close with the loss of 100 jobs. It just doesn’t make enough money.

The number of positive Covid-19 cases linked to a food

processing plant in Coupar Angus in Perth and Kinross has now reached 110.

A total of 96 employees at the 2 Sisters factory have tested positive, plus 14 of their contacts.

New figures released last week show that nearly 600 people in Scotland are thought to have caught coronavirus at work.

The data includes eight people who died from the virus since April. Care home workers account for nearly two thirds of the suspected occupational exposures, according to Health and Safety Executive data.

But hairdressers, funeral directors, beauty therapists and NHS workers are among those who are also thought to have been exposed to the virus at work.

Gary Smith, secretary of the GMB Scotland union, said there is likely to be significant under-reporting of cases.

He said, “The events of the last six months simply do not give any confidence in these figures.”

Statutory sick pay in Britain is a measly £94.25 a week.

Workers should be given full pay when isolating to ensure their choice is not between poverty or coronavirus.

Isabel Ringrose

## Tories to fine partygoers

THE TORIES and the police are cracking down on unlicensed music events and parties that they don’t like.

Fines of up to £10,000 for those organising raves in England will come into force ahead of the bank holiday on Friday 28 August.

Equipment can also be seized.

The fine can also be levied on “any other unlawful gathering of 30 people or more”—which could include protests.

Participants can continue to be issued

with fines of £100.

Those with previous penalties will see the amount double on each offence, up to a maximum of £3,200.

Home secretary Priti Patel said, “These gatherings are dangerous and those who organise them show a blatant disregard for the safety of others.

The Tories aren’t concerned about safety.

They just don’t like mass events that they don’t control.

And the police have been particularly ready to shut down

events where numbers of black people are involved.

The National Police Chiefs’ Council has threatened that forces in England and Wales will continue to increase patrols heading into the bank holiday weekend.

Fines for not wearing face coverings where it is mandated are also set to double for repeat offenders from Friday.

They will start from £100 and double for each repeat offence to a maximum of £3,200.



Shopping in Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM

## Push to end lockdown caused latest outbreak

by NICK CLARK

COPS and government officials led a drive to blame ordinary people for a spike in coronavirus infections that means lockdown restrictions could be imposed in Birmingham.

Birmingham was placed on the government’s watch list on Friday of last week as cases rose.

The city’s rate of infection rose to 32 per 100,000 people—up from 12 per 100,000 at the beginning of August.

Birmingham’s Labour council leader Ian Ward said outbreaks occurred in workplaces, home gatherings and restaurants filled by the Tories’ “eat out to

help out” scheme.

It’s a clear sign that the Tories’ push to reopen businesses and workplaces and get profit flowing again is behind the rise in infections.

Yet after encouraging people to gather, politicians and cops blame them for not following “guidelines”.

Police in Birmingham shut down more than 70 social gatherings over the weekend.

It came after West Midlands Tory mayor Andy Street said people had “not been strict enough” in staying apart.

Meanwhile, many of the businesses and workplaces where people are at most risk are allowed to keep running.

People are forced to keep working for fear of losing their job or wages.

Birmingham construction worker Sam Beard told the Guardian newspaper, “At the moment there is a disincentive to self-isolate if you fear you will lose income.”

He added, “At the end of the day, it’s always profit over people.

“My job has some of the highest levels of casualties but I can tell you some tinpot construction companies are doing the bare minimum in terms of safety to keep operating.

“Covid measures go out of the window when they’re at risk of being fined for not making the deadline.”

**Socialist Worker**  
WHAT WE THINK

## CHALLENGE THE SYSTEM TO FIGHT FOR BLACK LIVES

THE BLACK Lives Matter (BLM) movement forced institutional racism onto the political agenda and shook the establishment.

Events in the US and Britain show it was right to point the finger at systematic racism—and also show the need to keep going.

US police officers shot Jacob Blake, a 29 year old black man from Wisconsin, seven times on Sunday. Just two days before, cops shot dead Trayford Pellerin as he was walking into a shop in Lafayette, Louisiana.

The shootings are two more examples in a long list, showing how the US state metes out violence and racism.

Black men and boys are 2.5 times more likely than white men and boys to die after coming into contact with the cops.

The US police are headed to exceed 1,000 killings for the sixth year in a row. The Washington Post newspaper has recorded 651 fatal shootings so far this year.

And Britain is not innocent.

Fresh figures show that police stop and searches rose by 40 percent in London during the height of the lockdown.

And fewer of the searches led

to an arrest. The Metropolitan Police used stop and search 104,914 times between April and June—which amounts to more than 1,100 times a day.

Only one in five of those led to an arrest, fine or caution.

Black people were nine times more likely to be stopped and searched in England and Wales in 2017-18, according to the government’s own statistics. And that’s when the police were only using their regular powers.

Black people were 40 times more likely to be stopped and searched when police used Section 60.

This allows them to authorise stop and search—without

“**The movement has won gains. But the police can’t be reformed to be anti-racist**

one scandal to the next, they’re still ahead of Labour in the polls.

Now there are rumours that even Labour MPs are frustrated with Starmer’s weakness.

Former left wing shadow chancellor Gavin Williamson leapt to his defence. “Keir’s got this exactly right,” he said last week.

It seems incredible that, while Starmer wages war on left wing members, McDonnell should throughout Corbyn’s leadership, the left failed to challenge the

“reasonable grounds” of suspicion—across a whole area.

The BLM movement has won real gains. In the US, it has forced some cities to cut police budgets, reduce the scope of police powers or repurpose prisons.

But the police cannot be reformed to be non-racist. Their institutional racism flows from their role within capitalist society.

They aren’t there to protect ordinary people or solve crime.

The British police, for instance, developed out of colonialism abroad and a rising working class movement at home.

Their role is to police working class people and help the smooth running of the system.

The ruling class pushes racism in order to keep ordinary people divided. These racist ideas run through the police, who target black people.

Young black and Asian people in particular are presented as potential criminals, muggers and members of violent gangs.

To uproot institutional racism we need to uproot the capitalist society that gives rise to it.

The BLM movement should inspire us to fight for a reckoning with the system.

right effectively. The focus on parliament meant bowing to the right’s constant threats to sabotage the “unity” of Labour. Now McDonnell is reduced to making excuses for Starmer.

Labour was outshone last week by resistance on the streets.

Angry protests by students, not clever performances in parliament, beat the Tories.

That sort of resistance is a far better alternative than what any part of the Labour Party has to offer.

**Breakfast in**



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## ANALYSIS

TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS



# Britain's links with generals in Belarus

**WESTERN STATES are scrambling to pose as supporters of the fight for democracy in Belarus. But those same states courted Aleksander Lukashenko's regime when it suited their interests.**

The British state trained Belarusian troops—including in “urban warfare tactics”—before condemning the regime's crackdown on protesters.

An investigation by the Declassified UK news website last week showed how links have grown between the British and Belarusian militaries. The top brass from the countries signed a “bilateral cooperation agreement for 2020” in November 2019, an agreement that appears to be still in force.

So Tory foreign secretary Dominic Rabb condemned the “grisly repression”. But as late as 29 June Britain's top general, Sir Nick Carter, telephoned Belarus' senior general Alexander Volfovich to discuss “the current state and prospects for the development of bilateral military cooperation”.

In March the Royal Navy said that marines “shared essential experience and expertise with Belarusian forces during landmark exercises”. It saw joint training between soldiers from the Royal Marines 42 Commando and Belarusian special forces from the 103 Guards Airborne Division.

Meanwhile, 20 soldiers from Belarus and Moldova practiced “live firing and new urban warfare tactics” in Wales in September 2019. It was part of Exercise Urban Ranger, alongside British troops. This cooperation flows from Lukashenko's attempts to play off rival imperialisms the US, the European Union (EU) and Russia.

Mainstream media present the Belarusian ruler as “Putin's man” but their relationship is much more fraught. Lukashenko has relied on Russian loans to prop up Belarus' economy and so kept himself aligned in the Russian camp. But this doesn't mean the Russian and Belarusian leaderships saw eye to eye.

## Shock

Lukashenko didn't pursue large scale privatisation after the collapse of Stalinist Russia and the Eastern Bloc, fearing free market shock therapy would destabilise his regime. And this has angered large sections of Russian oligarchs, who want to get their hands on Belarus' state assets.

There have been other points of tensions between Lukashenko and Putin. So, more recently, Lukashenko has sought to bring in investment by building ties with the EU and China. Putin has tried to put a stop to Belarus' tilt towards the West, and began pushing Lukashenko into talks for a closer state union at the beginning of the year. To try to get his way, he threatened to totally slash oil and gas subsidies by 2025.

By taking part in British military exercises, Lukashenko was sending a message to Putin. Commenting on training in Belarus in March, political analyst Alexander Klaskovsky said, “The Belarusian leadership knows how Moscow reacts painfully to such things.

“Lukashenko is simply showing Moscow that there are plenty more fish in the sea and that he has alternatives.”

The West and Russia's rivalry over Belarus has nothing to do with democracy vs dictatorship. But, against the backdrop of growing imperialist rivalry, it's no surprise the US, Britain and EU pose as the protesters' friends.

They bank on a future president being solidly pro-Western and pro-market in order to weaken their Russian rivals.

The left should back the Belarusian protests, pointing to our common cause against those at the top of society.

During the summer of 1968 there were important risings both West and East. As Socialist Worker reported, “In Chicago, police supported by troops with fixed bayonets mercilessly beat up peaceful and unprotected demonstrators. In Prague, Russian tanks patrol the streets.

“There are important differences between American and Russian society. But both have in common this much—they are controlled by small ruling classes that will use all the resources of modern technology to keep down the workers who may threaten their rule.”

Today in Portland and other US cities, the cops mete out baton blows, bullets and tear gas to put down an uprising against racism and police murder. In Minsk, military vehicles patrol the streets and riot police beat up protesters.

Supporting the Belarusian movement requires internationalism and solidarity, not lining up behind our own hypocritical rulers.

PROTESTS CONTINUED in Belarus (above) despite threats from president Lukashenko (below)

# Protests call for freedom as Lukashenko issues threats

**BELARUSIAN president Aleksander Lukashenko launched a fresh crackdown on the democracy movement on Monday.**

Arrests of opposition leaders and threat to sack striking workers came after tens of thousands of people took to the streets across Belarus on Sunday.

More than 150,000 people marched through the capital Minsk. They demanded Lukashenko's resignation in the wake of a rigged presidential election in the eastern European country.

It marked the 15th day of protests—and strikes at key state-owned companies—after Lukashenko claimed victory over liberal candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.

Andrej, a supporter of independent trade unions and an unemployed worker, has been on the streets of Minsk. “We've not been free for 26 years and the feeling now is, ‘It's time’,” he told Socialist Worker.

## Crush

“We will win this battle and we will crush Lukashenko.”

Andrej described an “excited” atmosphere during the protests and strikes, with people “shouting in the streets for freedom and rights”.

On one protest “around the city people were just singing songs, the philharmonic theatre had organised

some concerts on the streets”.

In the industrial city of Grodno, in western Belarus, striking workers from the chemicals plant headed a thousands-strong march.

But Lukashenko has made it clear that he won't go down without a fight.

On Sunday convoys of military vehicles drove around the streets of Minsk in the morning.

Lukashenko, clad in riot police gear and brandishing an AK-47 assault rifle, flew above the city in the presidential helicopter. The

following day Lukashenko had threatened to shut down firms where workers remain on strike.

Police arrested Tikhanovskaya aid Olga Kovalkova and Sergei Sylebsky, who has led strikes at the Minsk Tractor Factory.

## Transition

They are both members of the Coordinating Council of Belarus (CCB), set up by Tikhanovskaya to manage a transition to democratic rule.

This body brings together liberal opponents of the regime, a former Lukashenko culture minister, bosses and some strike leaders.

Figures who favour more free market policies are rising in the leadership of the CCB.

One CCB member, Pavel Daneyko, was a co-founder of the Institute of Privatisation and Management in 1994.

The institute was set up to train the managers of state-owned companies in how to squeeze more out of workers.

These sorts of policies will not solve unemployment or other social problems facing ordinary people in Belarus.

A genuine alternative lies with workers fighting for democracy, social justice and a society where they are in charge.

# Long legacy of Stalin

**STALINISM CASTS a long shadow in Belarus and eastern Europe.**

In Stalinist Russia and the Eastern Bloc the ruling class—the state bureaucracy—behaved in the same way as bosses do under free market capitalism.

Its aim was accumulating profit and to get ahead of international rivals.

After revolutions in 1989-91, these societies transitioned from state capitalism to a free market capitalism.

Ordinary people paid the price of free

market policies. Today many mass movements in eastern Europe are trapped between defending parts of state capitalism and looking to the free market.

Minsk tractor works strike leader Sergei Sylebsky says that the lack of oligarchs is “far from an achievement”.

Protester Andrej wants “a market economy” but without oligarchs or multinationals taking over. Neither state capitalism nor free markets offer any alternative for working class people.



**Got a story?**

Email ideas to [reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)



# Unfair exam grades still punishing students

A-level marking system encouraged low predictions for pupils in worse-off schools, reports **Sadie Robinson**

**A FRESH row has broken out over exam grades. And it exposes the way that the system operates to drive down the results of working class children.**

Fury at the downgrading of A-Level and GCSE grades forced the Tories into a humiliating U-turn last week. They agreed that students could use “centre assessed grades” instead of grades calculated by a dodgy algorithm.

The centre assessed grades were based on teacher assessments. But they also underwent a process of moderation.

Now some schools are complaining that they followed Tory advice to mark students down—and they want the right to challenge the grades.

The row has seen David Blow from the Ofqual exams regulator demand that schools have the right to appeal over the grades.

He said schools are “coming under attack from parents and students” over the scandal.

“They heeded the call from education secretary Gavin Williamson to ensure that distribution of grades followed a similar pattern to that in other years, i.e. following the calculated grades model,” he said.

“These schools are now in an unfair position in comparison with others, which focused on individual pupil grades.”

He said schools should be allowed to resubmit grades “without having to include unrepresentative previous years’ performance in the calculation”.

## Stitched

The whole scandal has shown how the education system is stitched up to disadvantage ordinary children. It is based on the idea that only a certain number of students will ever achieve the highest grades.

And because students at the top schools have a huge advantage over others, their schools tend to produce higher results on average. These figures are then used to downgrade students at state schools, who are

## BACK STORY

**Students defeated the Tories over unfair A-level results last week**

- A government algorithm predicted grades for students based on their post codes
- It meant mostly working class students final results were downgraded
- A backlash—and protests—forced the Tories to retreat
- But the new system is still biased against working class students

just not expected to do very well.

Every year right wing politicians and media pundits bemoan “grade inflation” and claim that exams are becoming “too easy”. The reality is that, even when working class students do well, there are checks and balances to push them back into their “place”.

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) also advised schools to look at previous results and “fit the pupils to the grades allocated”.

It said the “great advantage” of this is that grades “will be exactly consistent with those of previous and succeeding years”.

So students are judged not on their abilities but by the school they go to. And if a school is deemed to perform poorly in one year, it will do so forever.

Meanwhile BTec students are still waiting to receive their results. And the Tories’ delay in altering grades means chaos for many students’ university applications.

Everyone who protested should be proud that they forced the Tories back. But we need to keep fighting to scrap the rigged exam system altogether.



## On other pages...

Why computer algorithms aren't neutral >> Page 11



**A PROTEST outside Downing Street last Friday**

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

## Campaign demands a fundamental change to biased education system

STUDENTS, EDUCATION workers and others have continued to protest over the exams grading scandal. They say the U-turn is not enough—and want more fundamental change.

NUS president Larissa Kennedy told Socialist Worker, “This scandal has hit students right now. But it also exposes problems at the heart of the exams system—such as classism, racism and disablism.”

“It wasn’t a mistake that students were downgraded. It was the logical outcome of the system.”

Jo Grady, president of the UCU union, told Socialist Worker, “The government tried to hide behind the idea that the algorithm is neutral. They are terrified of people who take action.”

“Now staff who have been fighting to save jobs are expected to pick up the pieces.”

Grady said that the UCU is demanding more funding for colleges and universities. But she added, “Funding is important but it doesn’t solve the broader issues. We need to dismantle our marketised education system.”

The NUS held small gatherings in protest at the scandal on Thursday of last week. Students also gathered at Downing Street on Friday of last week to demand the right of appeal and transparency over BTec results.

They demanded that Tory education secretary Gavin Williamson resign, chanting, “Get Gav gone.”

The U-turn means the protests are smaller. But for many people, the scandal has exposed the inequality at the heart of the system.

BTec student Glen told the protest that class bias lies behind the scandal. He asked, “Why do they assume that children in state schools are going to do badly? Why do they think we are not

worthy of good results? Because they don’t value people who aren’t like them.”

Primary school teacher Emma brought solidarity from the NEU union. “The Tory government is cheating young people of their futures,” she said.

“This exams system has got to go.”

Student Zoe said the fight had to continue “for people in year 10 and year 12” who are due to sit exams next year. “How are they supposed to trust Gavin Williamson with their education?” she asked.

“He’s already mucked it up for us.”

Teacher Alasdair said that the algorithm that caused this year’s scandal “has been used for over ten years”.

“The system is about separating the sheep from the goats,” he said. “They have been rationing success for years. This is going to happen again unless there’s action.”

Larissa agreed. “This is not just about the here and now,” she said. “It’s about uprooting the whole discriminatory education system. We want justice for every student, every year.”



**Larissa Kennedy**



# Israel shells and bombs besieged Gaza Strip

It's time to support the Palestinians who dare to resist Israeli land grabs and occupation, says Nick Clark

**ISRAEL HAD pounded the Gaza Strip with airstrikes and shells for at least 12 days in a row as of last Friday.**

The barrage was part of an attempt to punish the besieged Palestinian enclave's two million residents for daring to resist.

Israel has bombed Gaza almost daily since 6 August, and is doing its best to make life there miserable for ordinary people.

Alongside airstrikes Israel has cut fuel imports shut one of the only crossings out of the Gaza Strip and completely closed Gaza's fishing zone.

The restriction on fuel imports shut down Gaza's only power plant, leaving residents with as little as three hours of electricity per day.

Without fuel, a sewage treatment plant in northern Gaza was forced to stop working. Israeli government officials then claimed the resulting overflow of raw sewage into Israel was a deliberate act by Palestinians.

Israel says its latest assault on Palestinians is a retaliation for incendiary balloons and kites launched into Israel from Gaza.

These ordinary kites or party balloons are fitted with firebombs tied to their tails, then filled with helium and released into Israel.

When successful, they land in fields on the Israeli side of the border fence, causing fires that Israeli forces rush to put out.

## Method

It's an inventive and defiant method of resistance by people who've spent 13 years living under a siege enforced by Israel's powerful military.

Abu Barq, a Palestinian activist told the Al Jazeera news network, "We came here to send a fiery message to the Israeli occupation that we in the Gaza Strip can no longer tolerate the blockade that's been taking place for 13 years.

"We would like to send a message that we deserve a decent life for our families and loved ones."

Abu Obaida, another activist, said

## BACK STORY

**The Israeli state has besieged the Gaza Strip since 2007**

- The enclave is home to two million Palestinians
- Israel wanted to punish Palestinian people for voting for Hamas in 2007
- The group led resistance to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land
- Gaza has faced routine assaults for over a decade

the balloons were a way of drawing attention to Palestinians' suffering.

"Nobody is looking at Gaza," he said. "We don't have any enmity with the Jewish people. Our battle is against their government that has been besieging us."

Israel imposed the siege in 2007 to punish Palestinians for electing Hamas—which resisted Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land—to lead the Palestinian Authority.

## Mercy

The siege leaves Palestinians at the mercy of Israel and its neighbouring ally, Egypt, which restrict access and the flow of basic goods into Gaza.

There is a severe scarcity of drinkable water in Gaza according to the United Nations, and 53 percent of people live below the poverty line.

Israel has waged three devastating wars on Gaza since 2007, killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and repeatedly destroying infrastructure.

Its soldiers also massacred ordinary Palestinians in 2018 and 2019 for daring to protest at the border fence that keeps them penned in.

Avi Dichter, chair of the Israeli government's foreign affairs and defence committee, said Gaza's infrastructure should be destroyed if the incendiary balloons don't stop.

It's right to support Palestinians who dare to resist.

A THREE finger salute, borrowed from the Hunger Games films, has become a symbol of resistance

# Student protests in Thailand demand democracy and an end to military rule

by GILES JI UNGPAKORN

CROWDS OF up to 50,000 pro-democracy protesters gathered around the Democracy Monument in the centre of Thailand's capital Bangkok last week.

The protest was organised by a group of mainly young people and university students calling itself the "Free People" organisation.

In the days following this protest, secondary school students up and down the country staged "Three finger salute" protests during the compulsory flag raising ceremony before start of school.

The three fingered salute was borrowed from Hunger Games, and became a symbol of opposition to the military dictatorship during anti-coup protests in 2014.

## Viral

Videos of school students defying and arguing with their teachers went viral on social media.

A few days later a group of school students left their classes to protest outside the Ministry of Education because the junta-appointed minister had made threats against them. As the

minister tried in vain to address the students, he was sent packing with shouts of "lackey of the dictatorship!"

The present junta came to power through the 2014 coup.

The "Free People" has three major demands—stop intimidating activists, rewrite the constitution, and dissolve parliament.

People are scandalised and fed-up by the behaviour of the new king, Wachiralongkorn, who spends his life in Germany. He has changed the constitution in order to allow this lifestyle and in order to amass even more wealth.

It is the first time in decades that people have had the confidence to criticise the king in public, despite the fact that there are draconian laws against this.

The powerful military has traditionally used the weak monarchy as a tool to justify authoritarian rule.

From the platform at a recent rally in the north-east, a leading student activist asked why former king Pumphon had supported military coups.

Students have managed to revive the pro-democracy protests, which have occurred sporadically

since 2014. The reason is that this new generation has seen that pushing for reforms within the parliamentary system has not worked.

Opposition parties and politicians have been banned by the military-controlled courts.

The junta wrote a new constitution to entrench military rule and held fake elections in early 2019.

## Signs

There are some hopeful signs. A small but militant union-led rally was held in Bangkok and some workers attended a student rally in Ayutthaya.

The lack of a significant organisation of the left will make the task of mobilising workers more difficult, but it is hoped that militants will step forward to try and achieve this.

As with the struggles in other countries like Sudan and Lebanon, activists will have to be wary of those proposing small "reforms" in order to maintain the status quo.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn is a Thai socialist in exile in Britain. Visit his blog at [uglytruththailand.wordpress.com](http://uglytruththailand.wordpress.com)



## Scots polls show up a turnaround

THE LATEST Scottish opinion poll shows 55 percent saying yes to independence and 45 percent saying no.

This is important for two reasons.

The poll is the fourth in a row to show a growing majority in favour of a break with the union. It is also significant because it is a complete reversal of the independence vote in 2014, which was 55 percent no and 45 percent yes.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) is also on course to have an absolute majority in the Scottish parliament after the 2021 election.

Despite some major SNP failings, people in Scotland are fed up of being governed by divisive, racist and incompetent Tory governments.

On the same day as the poll was announced, people rallied for independence in Bannockburn, Stirling.

Neil MacKay, one of the organisers, said, "The movement is frustrated and desperate for action. Things are going to need to change.

"Either the leadership steps up to the plate and pursues a credible strategy or there has to be a change of leadership.

"I can see us escalating our activities, working more with trade unions in a more joined up approach so we can make Scotland ungovernable."

Clearly there are major issues confronting the independence movement in Scotland, which the Scottish National Party is unable to address.

**Bob Fotheringham**  
Glasgow



## Scrapping our public health body is all about deflection

SCAPEGOATING IS behind the Tory decision to scrap Public Health England (PHE).

It is definitely about political deflection from the government's failures during the coronavirus pandemic. Ultimately, these were policy decisions and not science decisions.

It's quite a big shock for myself and other workers at PHE and there's a lot of frustration and uncertainty.

At PHE we have "health protection" and "health improvement". Health protection is the National Infection Service. That's all the labs and surveillance of infectious diseases from vaccine preventable stuff to exotic diseases, such as Ebola.

Health improvement is all the

non-infectious stuff, whether it is dementia, alcoholism and drug addiction or obesity.

We don't know what's going to happen to the "health improvement" side of PHE. People aren't against reorganisation, but we can't see a good case for it.

PHE has not been the greatest employer over the years.

When it was formed in 2013, there was an issue with our terms and conditions.

We used to be part of the NHS's Agenda for Change contracts, but were then forced onto civil service terms and conditions.

Lots of people are on the old conditions. And if you had reached the top of the old scales, you probably hadn't had a pay rise in ten years.

And now there's worry about creeping privatisation of labs, which would probably be the first bit to go.

Health secretary Matt Hancock's framing of pandemics as part of "national security" doesn't sit comfortably with me.

The new Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), set up a few months ago, is nestled in with counter-terrorism.

It's a bit weird and there's no clear reason why.

This is about the direction of public health, where at the moment we have non-infectious, infectious and labs together.

The problem is one of underfunding and understaffing during the last ten years.

**A Public Health England worker**  
by email

Just a thought...

## Now plotting for profits

OWEN SMITH, who failed in his bid to replace Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2016, has a new job.

No longer an MP, he has become "UK government relations director" for BMS, one of the world's biggest medical drugs companies and a supplier to the NHS.

According to its website it is involved in projects with 15 different NHS trusts.

No doubt Smith's links in parliament will help his new employers open even more doors.

**Phil Allsopp**  
Abergavenny

## Exams—we can win more

POPULAR pressure has forced climbdowns over exam grades but the chaos continues.

The deeply flawed exam system did at least allow a small minority from poor areas the chance of a better life.

But whenever possible the socialist alternative should also be argued.

All students should be free to choose their subjects and level of study.

Better tutoring would help any who had overreached themselves to self-relocate to a more appropriate course and level.

It would avoid the annual stress suffered by students, parents and educators.

**Dermot Smyth**  
Sheffield

## Colour can't unite us all

IT'S SAD to see some people on the liberal left embracing the Democrat choice of Kamala Harris for vice president.

Assuming that because Harris is a person of colour she will act favourably towards all those in the streets demanding Black Lives Matter is both lazy and wrong.

Harris has been a willing participant in one of capitalism's most serious crimes—the criminalisation and incarceration of black people.

Her Democrat party is determined to defend this vile set up, and Harris will doubtless play her part.

**Lolita Gooden**  
New York, US

## We found moving quickly is the key for anti-racists

ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISTS in the north east of England had to react quickly last weekend to a spate of racist stickers that had gone up across the region.

The stickers particularly targeted "race mixing".

One read, "No Pollution. No Race Mixing. No Modern Art." Another read, "Coal miners were white slaves."

The stickers were a calculated attempt by the far right to sow racist ideas.

Anti-racists swiftly covered up the stickers and

found new supporters in the process.

Many people were outraged by the Nazi stickers and got in touch with us to ask for Stand Up To Racism ones so they too could get involved in covering them up.

Together we found the key was to act fast to stop the racists in their tracks before they established themselves—and to build anti-racism in the local communities.

**N Jones**  
Newcastle

## Fight for freedom for Algerian journalist

I AM asking Socialist Worker readers to join the campaign for imprisoned journalists in Algeria.

Earlier this month a tribunal in Algiers sentenced Khaled Drareni to a three-year prison sentence over his reporting on the Hirak protest movement.

This is the movement for democracy and social justice that has been raging for over 18 months.

The court also handed two-year prison sentences to political activist Samir Ben Larbi, and national coordinator of the families



Khaled Drareni

of disappeared Slimane Hamitouche.

This was over their online publications and

their participation in the protests.

Khaled is the founder of the Casbah Tribune news site, a correspondent for the French TV channel TV5Monde, and a representative of Reporters without Borders in Algeria.

All those who stand for people's rights should stand with the political prisoners of Algeria.

Khaled must be released and all charges dropped against him.

Please sign the petition at [bit.ly/FreeKhaled](http://bit.ly/FreeKhaled)

**Dhea Addi**  
West London



# CRASH ON THE STREETS

## HOW CRUEL TORY PLANS WILL FUEL HOMELESS CRISIS

Sackings and benefits sanctions have left ever more people struggling to pay their rent. The Tories' plan to end a ban on evictions in September—meaning thousands could be thrown out, reports **Sadie Robinson**

**S**OME 230,000 people could be made homeless across England because of a Tory policy change expected late next month. It's the equivalent of more than the entire population of Portsmouth losing their homes.

Under pressure, the Tories announced a temporary suspension of evictions for some tenants on Friday last week. But this will soon end—and already people are being threatened with eviction.

Cleaning manager Deborah in Southport has been relying on food banks to feed herself and her daughter during the pandemic.

"My landlady keeps harassing me as she wants me out," Deborah told the Shelter housing charity.

"I was furloughed, and I asked her if we could come to an agreement on the rent while we saw what happened. She went ballistic and demanded I pay it all."

Mikkel is the founder of Under One Sky, a collection of volunteers providing support to homeless people in London.

He told Socialist Worker that the end to the eviction moratorium could mean "we start seeing a different type of new-to-the-streets person" being made homeless.

The end of other policies such as Everyone In, where some homeless people were temporarily housed in hotels, has already had an effect.

"We saw people returning to the



street who had been part of the hotel solution," said Mikkel. "The funding for the scheme basically ended. Publicly the plan is to rehouse people, and that is happening for some but clearly not for all.

"If the accommodation wasn't there before, why should it suddenly miraculously turn up?"

The Groundswell project has monitored the impact of coronavirus on homeless people throughout the pandemic.

Its latest briefing spells out the desperate situations that people are enduring.

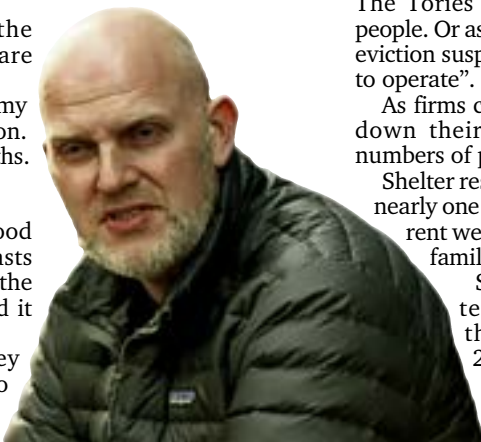
"I am currently living in a shed in my sister's garden," explained one person. "I have been living here for four months.

### Sanctioned

"I've been receiving food from a food bank every two weeks. The food lasts about four days. I was sanctioned by the DWP in March for three months and it was only lifted in June."

Tory policies and the system they defend pushes more people into homelessness—then traps them there. Many people who eventually

**Police surround homeless people sleeping rough in central London (above) Mikkel, the founder of Under One Sky, a collection of volunteers supporting homeless people in the capital (below)**



get into temporary accommodation find themselves stuck paying off old council tax arrears or crisis loans.

These are automatically deducted from benefits—Groundswell found that some people got only half their benefits due to arrears deductions.

This leaves people with even less to get by on and makes future rent arrears—and eviction—more likely.

Several homeless people said they had no income at all during the pandemic due to a benefit sanction. Some were forced to beg.

Many felt "forgotten". "I've heard a lot of people are thinking about suicide," said one housing support worker. "I've never had so many people tell me that there's no hope and no point in going on."

Mikkel said, "I felt we saw three phases during the pandemic. The first was that homeless people lacked basic necessities, such as food.

"Then we saw more health-related issues, such as lice.

"Then there was a mental health phase. We had to call more ambulances because people were more suicidal. There were suicide attempts."

### Market

The Tories put profit above ordinary people. Or as they put it, they will end the eviction suspension "to allow the market to operate".

As firms cut jobs and the Tories wind down their furlough scheme, rising numbers of people fear homelessness.

Shelter research last month found that nearly one in five parents who privately rent were more concerned that their family will become homeless.

Some 174,000 private tenants had already been threatened with eviction, 2 percent of the total.

As Deborah said, "You're always one step away from eviction."

## Tenants say, 'People can achieve a lot if they stand up for themselves'

**A** GROUP OF mainly women tenants in east London have shown that it's possible to challenge councils and corporate landlords—and win. Their campaigning forced Newham council to take back more than 250 properties in Custom House and Canning Town from private firm Mears.

The firms that previously leased out the homes had dismissed the working class people who lived in them. Now the tenants' victory means a drastic rent cut and promises of improvements.

Custom House tenant campaigner Boglarka told Socialist Worker how ordinary people challenged the rule of profit. "I moved into the home in 2011 and it wasn't long before problems started to show," she said.

"The windows wouldn't close properly, and in winters it was really cold. Rents were sky high. I was falling into arrears.

### Demolition

"Parts of Canning Town and Custom House had initially been marked for demolition in 2000. My estate was a 'sink estate' with persistent socio-economic problems. Creating 'mixed communities' and having 'market-led regeneration' were offered as a panacea.

"By 2011 it became obvious that homeless households needed to be accommodated. The council signed up to a PFI scheme with temporary housing provider Tando. It took over the leases of 263 homes.

"Our homes have always been very basic and substandard. As they became



Canning Town residents celebrate

'privately rented' under Tando, they were made exempt from the 'decent homes standard'. But the lack of maintenance and repairs made things far worse.

"Mears acquired Tando in 2014. Both were adamant that tenants like us 'should not really expect more than basic repairs' as the blocks were to be demolished and we were only 'temporary' tenants.

"I felt cheated. PFI was not working for the people. Whatever problems there were, Mears was slow to respond.

"I started looking for campaigns and I found Peach (People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House), so I joined. We had several protests and regular

meetings. We planned a rent strike. The campaign was mostly made up of women with children in temporary accommodation. We documented every issue and handed it all to the council.

"We found out that our rents were approximately 2.5 times higher than those paid by our council tenant neighbours.

"When I heard the council was taking our homes back under council management, I felt very happy. I felt finally we can get on with our lives.

"Yet it took years of campaigning before the Labour council agreed and it will be a gradual process from September. The council still doesn't have concrete plans for what to do with the homes. It has wasted some 20 years already.

### Fight

"Problems with the homes are still there—my house is in really bad condition. We still have to fight. We don't want developers and venture capital coming here and taking advantage. Now we are spreading the word, and more people are joining the campaign. We are hoping to win affordable homes for everyone.

"I hope we inspire other groups. We have shown the power of people.

"To anyone in a similar situation I would say, don't give up. Look for local organisations. Organise in your neighbourhood to get things going.

"I feel that the message 'people not profit' has never been clearer. People can achieve a lot if they stand up for themselves."

**TENTS ARE** appearing in towns and cities across Britain as evictions soar. The situation can only worsen as hundreds of thousands lose their jobs and the Tories remove protections brought in at the start of the pandemic

HOMELESS PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN



## Why assumptions made by computers aren't neutral

by **SOPHIE SQUIRE**

THE A-LEVELS scandal has an algorithm at the heart of it—and algorithms are all about us.

At its simplest an algorithm is a set of rules or instructions designed to solve a problem. They are essential to the way computers process information.

They can also be used to simulate sequences and trends. By using data that already exists, they can try to predict data that doesn't.

This is what was so pernicious about the exam results scandal.

It was assumed that schools' past performance would necessarily be replicated by individuals in those schools again. If it was the sort of school that "didn't get A grades", then it wouldn't this time either.

But this is just one example of a highly conservative method. People don't always behave in the way they have before.

They can change and grow and learn—or become embittered and regress. And behind algorithms there are always political concepts and political decisions.

### Assumptions

They aren't neutral or simply technical. They are based on assumptions and views about people as individuals and as classes.

If you work for Uber or Deliveroo, your boss is—supposedly—an algorithm.

The police use algorithms to try and predict where crimes will be committed and who will be the criminals.

But the data fed in relies on how police have operated before—with all of the inevitable bias.

Hannah Couchman of the human rights group Liberty said that arrests made on the basis of such data were "already imbued with discrimination, entrenched by algorithms".

**“**Police algorithms rely on how cops have operated before and are imbued with bias**”**

This month, after an outcry, the government was forced to scrap an algorithm processing visa applications.

It played a role in deciding whether people have a right to stay in Britain.

But Chai Patel of the migrant rights group JCWI explained that the "streaming tool took decades of institutionally racist practices" and "turned them into software."

Another group described it as "speedy boarding for white people".

Such systems are highly attractive for many banks and huge corporations, such as Amazon.

And now some free marketeers hope that algorithms could mean a stripped-back capitalist state.

It offers the possibility of removing all those costly civil service workers with lines of code that don't have discretion—and code doesn't join unions.

Far better to have a soulless programme delivering sanctions and cutting off benefits than relying on a person.

It hides a process based on conservative assumptions behind a veneer of "computer says no". It's not Tory ministers who are wrecking your future, it's the algorithm.

Revealing the assumptions and the politics behind algorithms is important.

That's what happened as the brilliant demonstrations led by students over A-levels started to shake the system.

Many carried signs saying they aren't simply statistics or a grade.

Once conscious human intervention takes hold, the algorithm becomes powerless.

There isn't a limit on our capacity to change, or our ability to reorder the world.

And however tightly and carefully they target the adverts, Facebook can't guarantee that you will buy what you are told is good for you—or make you vote Tory.



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

## INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

## REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

## THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

## INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

## Socialist Workers Party online meetings



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page [facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty](https://facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty) for news of national online meetings and other updates.

## LEBANON—CATASTROPHE TO REVOLUTION

## CHESTERFIELD

Thu 3 Sep,  
6.30pm  
829-532-8731

## EXETER

Wed 2 Sep,  
7pm  
865-2972-2883

## SHEFFIELD &amp; SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Thu 3 Sep,  
7pm  
529-174-9278

## YORK &amp; SCARBOROUGH

Wed 2 Sep,  
7.30pm  
827-489-7492

## COVENTRY

Wed 2 Sep,  
7.30pm  
823-945-1917

## NORWICH

Wed 2 Sep,  
7.30pm  
906-652-5299

## SOCIALIST WORKER ONLINE MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and local interventions. All welcome.

## BIRMINGHAM

**Combating racism in our mental health services**  
Wed 2 Sep, 7pm  
281-634-5938

## BLACK COUNTRY

**Does unconscious bias explain racism?**  
Wed 2 Sep, 8pm  
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# The sun should have set on the Twilight saga long ago

Midnight Sun is yet another re-telling of the original Twilight story by Stephenie Meyer—who stretches it to breaking point, writes **Sarah Bates**

**EDWARD CULLEN and Bella Swan are back—well, sort of.**

Some 15 years after the first Twilight novel was published, Stephenie Meyer gets a third bite of the cherry.

After releasing a bizarre gender-swapped retelling of Twilight in 2015, now we get Midnight Sun—a blow-by-blow take on the 2005 novel from Edward's perspective.

The lack of imagination it takes to write and publish three novels based on an identical story aside, Midnight Sun doesn't quite work.

The thing that makes Edward such a compelling romantic figure is his mystery. To read his first person thoughts exposes him as the moody teenager we also suspected he might be.

Hearing him constantly rail against his parents, his classmates and jealously criticise his love rivals is anodyne at best. At worst it exposes him for the abusive boyfriend he actually is.

Midnight Sun does at least actually give us some character development for Bella. Although I remain convinced that being clumsy cannot be used as a central character trait.

Edward declares her "kind and self-effacing and unselfish and brave". He watches in creepy detail as she adjusts to her new life in Forks, and the compassion she shows for her family and classmates.

## Refreshing

It's a refreshing break from Bella's first person worrying that she's not interesting or pretty enough to warrant Edward's attention.

And it's definitely weird to keep reading Edward talk about her "blood pumping under her translucent skin". But it does at least get across some of the personal struggle that Bella has no idea about.

At over 750 pages, the book is bloated and attempts to cover all the events in Twilight alongside other elements of exposition about Edward's life.

It would have benefited from a tighter focus on Edward and his family, the Cullens.

For anyone who has read the original series, we don't exactly need the reams of words describing how much he fancies Bella. That point is definitely already hammered home.

It's entirely plausible that Meyers will keep pumping out versions of the same books to satisfy the Twilight fans and keep milking the cash cow.

For anyone looking to escape into teenage nostalgia, Midnight Sun might be one to devour.

But it doesn't—and doesn't try to—go much further than that.

Midnight Sun is out now



A POSTER for the 1925 silent film Battleship Potemkin

## Revolutionary classic on the big screen

### FILM

#### BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

At the BFI Southbank on Sat 1 Sept and Sat 12 Sept. Book tickets online at [bit.ly/BFIpotemkin](http://bit.ly/BFIpotemkin)

**TICKETS ARE on sale for showings of Battleship Potemkin**

at the BFI cinema on London's South Bank.

This groundbreaking 1925 film by Sergei Eisenstein is a telling of a mutiny by Russian sailors during the 1905 revolution.

In the midst of the revolution, sailors aboard the Potemkin

mutiny after finding maggots in their rotten meat.

Those who rebel are ordered to be shot, but the firing squad refuses.

The protest onboard becomes a riot and spreads to the city of Odessa as the ship sails into port.

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### MUSIC

#### LOVE MUSIC HATE RACISM GLASGOW ALBUM

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LOVE MUSIC Hate Racism Glasgow has made an album.

It features artists from all over Scotland coming together to support the anti-racism movement and promote unity and resistance.

Activists have appealed for help with covering final costs.



### NOVEL

#### THE KILLINGS AT KINGFISHER HILL

By Sophie Hannah. Out now

IF YOU are missing Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's famous detective, then read the latest novel from Sophie Hannah.

Hannah has been enlisted to create new Poirot stories by the Agatha Christie estate. Her fourth, The Killings at Kingfisher Hill, has the same reassuring old-fashioned feel to the style of writing and the language.

She does a good job of recreating Poirot with all his eccentricities and charming—or irritating depending on your point of view—habits.

And her sidekick for him, Inspector Catchpool, is as naive as Captain Hastings in the original books.

Poirot has been summoned to a fancy house at Kingfisher Hill by Richard Devonport. He is convinced that the wrong woman, Helen, is about to be hung for the murder of his brother Frank.

Things get more complicated when his sister, Daisy, also confesses to the murder. And then we discover that Helen, who is now engaged to Richard, was in a relationship with Frank when he died.

### Bizzare

The plot gets going with a pretty bizarre and seemingly separate situation. A young woman travelling on the same coach as Poirot gets off because she fears she will die if she sits in a certain seat.

When a body later turns up, Poirot has another baffling puzzle to solve. He also has to figure out if the two deaths are linked.

The book has all the things you would want from a murder mystery of this kind. There's an overbearing patriarch who controls his family through fear and money. Some people aren't who they seem to be, and everyone has a secret to hide.

Bits of the plot could have been stronger. The explanation behind the scenes on the coach isn't very convincing. And having characters explain away strange behaviours by saying that "our true thoughts are often profoundly irrational" is a bit of a weak response.

But still, it's an enjoyable read and I'd finished it within a few days.

There are some good plot twists and anyone who likes whodunnits should enjoy it.

**Sadie Robinson**



**F**ENCES, walls and divisions run through Nick Hayes's *The Book of Trespass*. It is a nature tour through the eyes of those who have scaled, dodged or broken the barriers that scar the land.

Hayes recounts an exchange with six fox hunters, who he meets when on the Duke of Beaufort's grounds.

They find him climbing over a locked gate and ask a question, that isn't a question, "Are you lost?"

Fox hunting shows who is in charge of the countryside by riding roughshod all over it. Walls are for jumping over for the rich and for keeping the poor out.

A third of Britain is still owned by aristocracy. The 24 non-royal dukes own almost four million acres between them.

In 2016 fourteen marquises received just over £35 million worth of farm subsidies for their 100,000 acres.

The seventeen dukes who received farm subsidies got £258.4 million between them.

After William conquered, the ancient tradition of the poor hunting became redefined as a poaching. The food ordinary people relied on was redefined as "game", the objects of a wealthy pastime.

Hayes writes, "Grouse shooting is presented by the lobby groups as the only commercially viable means of maintaining a grouse moor, a rhetorical hall of mirrors, which is like saying golf is the only way of keeping a golf course running."

**T**HE development of capitalism in Britain was tied to hundreds of years of land theft—enclosures.

Historian EP Thompson described it as a "plain enough case of class robbery, played according to the fair rules of property and law laid down by a parliament of property owners and lawyers".

So between 1750 and 1860 over four thousand individual applications of enclosure were passed by government. These account for a third of the English agricultural land now in private hands.

There have been hundreds of years of battles as the rich took over the land—some large, some small.

At the start of the eighteenth century, fuelled by wider civil unrest, across Hampshire and Berkshire, poaching transformed into protests for equal rights.

In broad daylight, groups of men and women would cross the fences and devastate the deer stock of local manor parks leaving carcasses stripped of meat. Occasionally they



ILLUSTRATION BY Nick Hayes from *The Book of Trespass*

# TRESPASS, CAPITALISM AND LAND

Simon Basketter looks at a new book examining how the rich have stolen huge swathes of public land—and passed centuries of laws to keep everybody else out



Nick Hayes

would leave the carcass of the gamekeeper.

Good nature writing evokes landscapes and ecologies of the countryside combined with history and facts you wish you knew already.

What is rarer is interspersing that with anger at the "violence and theft" that shaped the land. Hayes alternates his polite trespassing with a history of landed property in England.

In 1531 Henry VII passed the Egyptian Act which described "an outlandish people, calling themselves Egyptians who have

colonialism are embedded in the stone of houses such as Charborough.

Drax argues he "can't be held responsible for something that happened three hundred or four hundred years ago".

Hayes notes that "he still owns the original sugar plantation in Barbados, and visits his Jacobean manor house there every year".

Hayes links subjection overseas to servitude at home. His analysis of slavery stems openly from the black historian Eric Williams.

He writes, "Slavery was an extreme version of a time-honoured hierarchy in England, its impetus was profit, its disguise was race, but its mechanism was class."

The imperial machinery of slavery and conquest bankrolled and legitimised the "cult of exclusion" that kept the people off their own turf.

The "magical architecture" and contours of the great estates lent that dogma a veneer of beauty.

Much of the discussion over who gets a path or even into the countryside still has echoes of the origin of the wealth.

The argument about access and rights of way is often extremely pasty-faced and as middle class as the queues for the Antiques Roadshow outside a stately home.

**W**HILE trying not to scare people who like books about nature walk, Hayes is angry.

It is a truism that the sign "Trespassers will be prosecuted" is wrong.

This underestimates judges' insistence that property is inviolable.

Even designated rights of way only confer limited permission. You are not entitled to deviate from the path, or to stop.

In 1994 the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act invented the crime of aggravated trespass.

Since 2014, aggravated trespass has expanded to include engaging in additional legal activities while trespassing.

As Hayes points out, "If you are doing something that is not illegal (photography, dancing, playing the flute), while doing something that is not criminal (trespassing) you can be automatically arrested, and liable to six months in prison."

And some of the queen's land is covered by extra bits of anti-terror trespass law too.

Less than 6 percent of the land in England and Wales is "Open Access".

Rights in Scotland are formally better but the realities of ownership are as bad.

People in England have the "right to roam" over only 10 percent of the country, and to boat or swim down 3 percent of rivers

The length of public

footpaths has halved, to around 118,000 miles, since the 19th century.

The book opens with the mass trespass of Kinder Scout in the Peak District in 1932.

The Duke of Devonshire's land in Derbyshire had long been contested by walkers and campaigners.

In April 1932 400 young people were met with a police escort.

When they reached the duke's land they were also met with gamekeepers hired for the event armed with sticks.

After fights a number of the group broke through and got some 400 metres onto the land. Five people were jailed for up to six months.

As 21 year old Communist Benny Rothman said at his trial, "We rambled, after a hard week's work, in smokey towns and cities, go out rambling for relaxation and fresh air."

"And we find the finest rambling country is closed to us. Our request, or demand, for access to all peaks and uncultivated moorland is nothing unreasonable."

**B**ATTLES over footpaths and rights of way can be problematic. First there is the process. As Hayes points out, battles with individual landowners with ancient maps and legal fights are weighted in favour of the rich.

There is a bigger issue with the idea of a right of way. Paths stem from an accumulated history of peoples moving in the same space.

But they beg the question of who controls the land either side of the path.

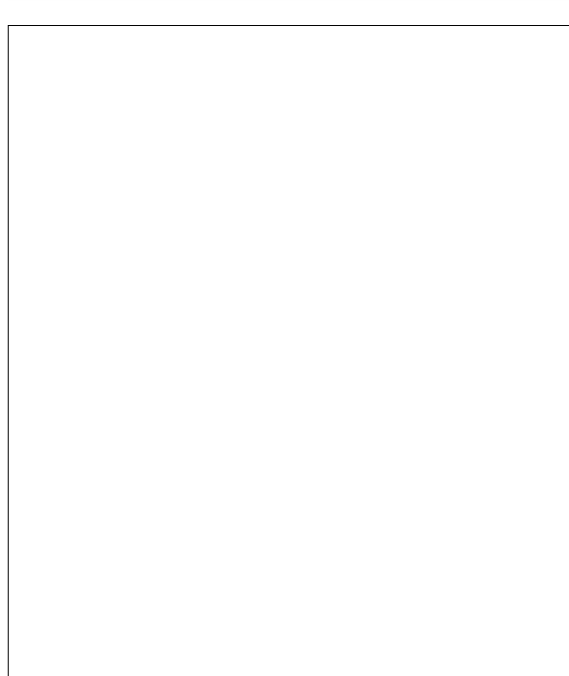
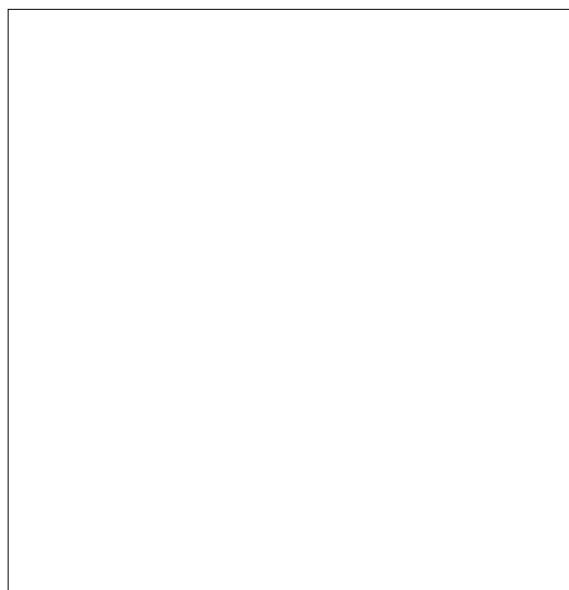
As Hayes puts it, "Our 'rights' to the land have become streamlined into thin strips of legitimacy to toe the line."

And it is worth noting that this is not all about old money.

The backdrop for ITV's *Midsomer Murders* is "the village of Hambleden, whose 1,600-acre estate and forty houses, pub and villages shops are all owned by a Swiss foreign exchange dealer."

The village was bought in 2007 under the name Hambleden Estates, who are registered in the British Virgin Islands.

This is modern capitalism. Hayes kayaks on the Thames



Fox hunting is about exerting power (top), Charborough House (above)

through Wind in The Willows country.

He writes, "On the west bank of the river is Fawley Court Farm, said to be one of the inspirations for Kenneth Grahame's *Toad Hall*, which was sold for £43 million to Fawley Court Inc., a company registered in the British Virgin Islands."

Village after estate is owned by offshore companies and the list continues for some time.

Perhaps the best contrast in the book is when Hayes visits the refugee camp in Calais.

He counterposes it with him then trespassing on the property of Paul Dacre, former head honcho of the *Daily Mail*.

"If England is full," Hayes points out, "it is full of space. And the walls that hide it."

righttoroam.org.uk

## READ MORE

● **Trespass—crossing the lines that divide us** by Nick Hayes £17.99

● **Stop, Thief! The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance** by Peter Linebaugh £14.99

● **'Kill all the Gentlemen' Class struggle and change in the English countryside** by Martin Empson £14.99

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## HISTORY

# Iran 1953—Britain's role in coup for oil and profit

Coup 53 tells a story from Britain's shameful history in the Middle East, says Isabel Ringrose

A NEW documentary exposes Britain's role in a coup to overthrow democracy in Iran.

Coup 53 tells the story of the overthrow of Iranian prime minister Mohammed Mossadeq in 1953, orchestrated by the US and Britain—all for oil.

Britain had an interest in the region's oil since its discovery at the beginning of the 20th century. It controlled the Iranian oil industry through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC)—now BP.

So when Mossadeq nationalised Iran's oil industry, British profits—and Western control of the region—were threatened.

The US proudly admits its part. Yet the British government has never owned up—and the extent of its involvement was never fully revealed.

Now, Coup 53 reveals how MI6 supplied ideas, planning, payment to Iranian politicians and recruited agents to undermine Mossadeq.

Britain had purchased 51 percent of AIOC in 1914, giving it huge political control in Iran.

## Hidden

Iran was promised that it would receive 16 percent of the revenue from oil production. But accounts were kept hidden from the Iranians and Britain took almost all the profit.

When he became Prime Minister in 1951, Mossadeq challenged British control by nationalising the oil industry and expropriating AIOC.

In retaliation, Britain enforced a global blockade to prevent Iran from selling its oil. It even threatened to sue any country who bought Iranian oil.

Documentary maker Taghi Amirani discovered a transcript of an unaired interview between the makers of the 1985 TV series *End of Empire*, and MI6 agent Norman Darbyshire.



MOHAMMED MOSSADEQ carried by his supporters

The transcript reveals that Darbyshire's brief was to overthrow Mossadeq.

In July 1952, Mossadeq and the Iranian monarch the Shah—loyal to Britain—clashed over who would control the military. Mossadeq resigned and British agents then installed a puppet prime minister, Ahmad Qavam.

Nationwide protests of Mossadeq's supporters broke out.

Troops loyal to the Shah killed 67 protesters. But five days later Mossadeq was reinstated as prime minister.

Britain's next step was a military coup. It chose Fazlollah Zahedi, a Nazi sympathiser, to be the next leader of Iran.

At the same time, Mossadeq appointed a new chief of police, Mahmoud Afshartous.

Afshartous had a list of Iranian officials conspiring with the US. He was tortured and assassinated to destabilise Mossadeq's government.

The documentary reveals that when asked if he was involved with the assassination,

**MI6 supplied ideas, planning and payment to undermine Mossadeq**

Darbyshire replied "Yes". It's damning evidence of Britain's part in the plot to overthrow Mossadeq.

In 1953 British prime minister Winston Churchill and US president Dwight Eisenhower approved operation Ajax—the plan to remove Mossadeq.

US and British agents convinced the Shah to appoint Zahedi as prime minister.

An attempted coup on 16th August to put Zahedi in power failed miserably and the CIA ordered its forces to leave Iran.

## Infiltrate

Darbyshire, however, went ahead with a back-up plan of allowing provocateurs, paid by the US, to infiltrate protests that had erupted because of the failed coup.

Tanks and soldiers attacked Mossadeq's house on 19 August. Mossadeq was accused of treason and put into solitary confinement until he died in 1967.

Britain regained a percentage of shares in Iranian oil, as did companies in the US and Europe.

The US spent \$45 million in aid to neutralise Mossadeq's supporters.

Britain's despicable meddling and denial of its involvement ever since shows the long history of how an entire region has been wrecked for profit.

Imperial rulers wanted only to be able to exploit Iran's oil industry without care for the consequences.

Coup 53 is out now. Go to [Coup53.com](http://Coup53.com)



PRITILATA WADDEDAR

## For equality in the armed struggle for freedom

by YURI PRASAD

PRITILATA Waddedar looked set for conventional success.

A hardworking student from a middle class Indian family in Bengal, Waddedar seemed to excel at everything she put her mind to.

After completing her degree she walked straight into becoming head of a school in her home city of Chittagong.

But India in the 1930s was a country in turmoil and before long she would be near the centre of it.

### Brutality

The threads of British rule were breaking, but the Empire responded to the movement for Indian independence with the utmost brutality.

And while Mohandas Gandhi organised mass protests that involved millions, he was quick to retreat if he sensed violent conflict coming.

Periods of demoralisation would follow, and the British would capitalise by fanning the flames of communal



PRITILATA WADDEDAR led an attack on a British Empire club

division between Hindus and Muslims.

Younger nationalist activists became increasingly angry with the impasse.

Many turned towards revolutionary methods, organising illegal strikes and protests—and launching

armed attacks on the British. Waddedar identified with the impatient activists.

She read illegal pamphlets and books that asserted the right to use violence to defeat the violence of Empire.

Her new convictions led her to a revolutionary group

led by Surya Sen. A fellow teacher, Sen combined a love of political philosophy with a talent for armed struggle.

Soon Waddedar was running guns to clandestine groups around her city.

The British were soon on her tail and military police

raided the houses she stayed at—although always one step behind her.

But secretly carrying arms and ammunition was never going to be enough for Waddedar.

She wanted to be part of the attacks herself and insisted she be allowed to join Sen's secret camp where promising new recruits were trained to use arms.

### Attack

It was there that she chalked out plans to launch an audacious attack on the Pahartali European Club. Wealthy Brits wine and dined there, while Indians were allowed in only to serve and cook.

The sign at the gate read, "Dogs and Indians not allowed".

As tension mounted in the attack group, there were new developments. Gandhi announced a "fast until death" in protest at British rule.

Panic spread among nationalists that he would die without seeing India free.

On 24 September 1932 Waddedar led a detachment

of fighters who stormed the club. They opened fire on the building killing four British officers and injuring seven women.

Waddedar was caught in the crossfire and badly wounded.

Cornered by the enraged British she bit on the cyanide capsule that revolutionaries carried.

She died at just 21 years old and left this note—"There may yet be many among my dear countrymen who would question [women being fighters].

"Nursed in the high ideal of Indian womanhood they may ask, how can a woman engage in such ferocious task of murdering and killing people?"

"I am pained at the distinction being made between a man and woman in the struggle for freedom of the country.

"Today if our brothers can enlist in the war of independence, we too the women should be allowed to do the same and why not?"

This is part of a series about radical black lives Go to [bit.ly/SWBlackLives](https://bit.ly/SWBlackLives)

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# Trump campaign tries to stamp on postal service

The White House hopes that suppressing postal voting will deliver victory for Donald Trump in November's presidential election. **Yuri Prasad** investigates

**IS DONALD Trump trying to win the presidential election by gutting the US Postal Service to make postal voting impossible?**

That's the conclusion being drawn after it became clear the service is being deliberately run down by postmaster general Louis DeJoy—a Trump appointee and financial backer.

His measures include removing giant sorting machines from mail centres, reducing post office hours and even physically removing post boxes.

The result is that vital mail isn't reaching people in desperate need, and that's especially true for the millions of people who order their medication online.

Don White is an 82 year old with heart disease who needs his drugs to survive—but is struggling to get them delivered.

"There have been a few times in which it's taken a week, week and a half, two weeks, but this is the first time I actually ran out," he explained last week.

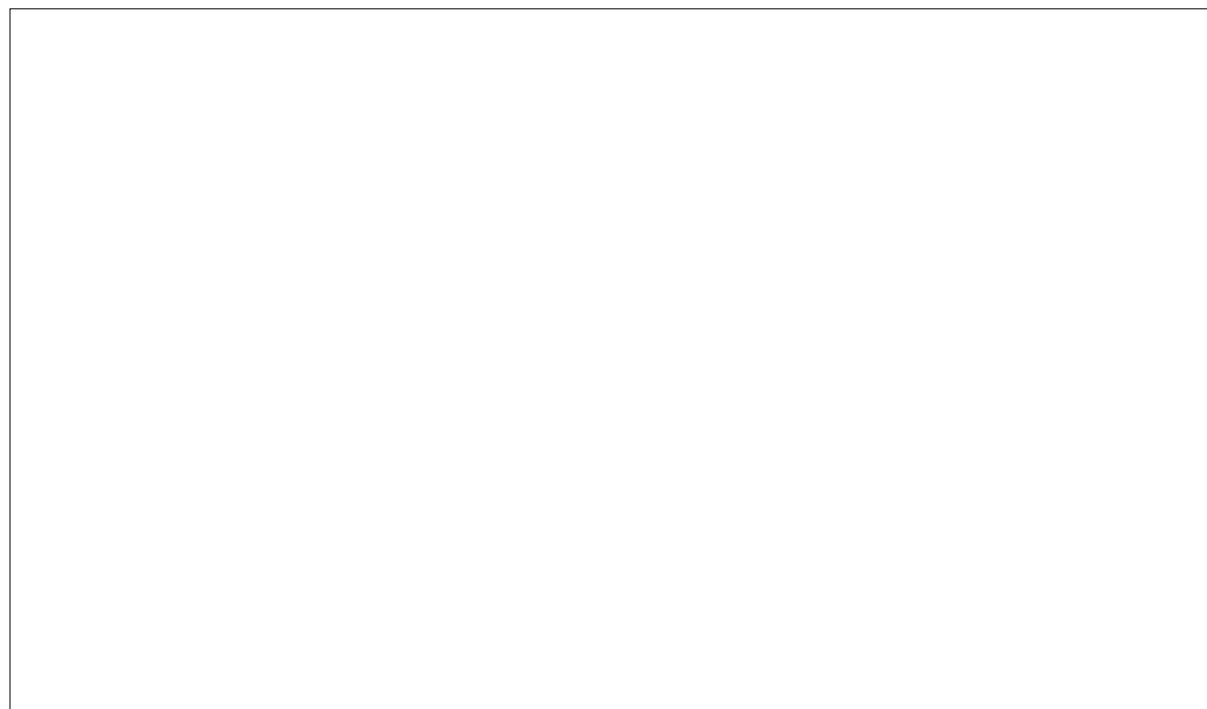
Don says he'd been tracking the package and saw that it was at a mail processing facility for ten days.

## Suffering

Such appalling suffering is amplifying questions around "mail-in" postal voting, which has become a key political trigger in the post crisis.

Despite it being by far the safest and most democratic way to conduct a presidential election in the midst of a pandemic, Trump repeatedly attacks postal voting.

He hopes that his supporters will go out and vote no matter the danger from coronavirus. Just last week he



THERE'S HUGE anger against Donald Trump's plans for postal voting

said that an election conducted by mail would "make our country the laughing stock of the world".

And, when asked about the resources needed to make postal voting work, Trump replied, "Now, if we don't make a deal, that means they don't get the money."

"That means they can't have universal mail-in voting, they just can't have it."

But the growing public outcry against the attacks on the post is heavily rooted in the US's rural communities, where deliveries are most essential. This has started

to ring alarm bells in the Trump campaign.

The mail is by a long way the US's most-supported public service, and attacking it is deeply unpopular.

A big part of the Republican party's powerbase lies in rural areas with conservative traditions.

## Impact

If those same areas are now being hit by the collapse of deliveries that could well have an impact on the Trump vote.

A petition to save the US Postal Service had gained over

1.5 million signatures last week. And union members planned a day of action on Tuesday.

Reacting to the crisis this week postmaster DeJoy announced that some of his plans will be rowed back—at least until after the election.

No one is yet sure whether that means the agency will be forced to undo some of the damage already done.

But the American Postal Workers Union said many of the mail sorting machines stripped out of big offices have now been dismantled and sold off as scrap.

Billionaire backer of Republicans

**Postmaster general Louis DeJoy is in charge of the US's state-owned postal service—but hates that it still exists.**

DeJoy holds shares in the XPO Logistics company.

Which means he has a vested interest in seeing USPS fail.

Why postal votes matter

**MANY US polling stations in other races have already closed.**

Those that remained open had hours-long queues. This not only poses a risk to voters, but could mean it is not possible to register the votes of everyone who turns out.

USPS wrote to states last month to say it might not be able to deliver postal votes in time to be counted.

## How private companies stole money from the mail

**THE UNITED States Postal Service (USPS) has long been in trouble. It has debts of around £122 billion.**

But behind that staggering figure lies a neoliberal accounting trick that both Democrats and Republicans agreed to.

In 2006 they signed up to an Act that meant USPS had to "pre fund" all its retirees' medical policies.

That meant setting aside millions of dollars for bills that haven't yet arrived. It is a practice that none of USPS's

A service driven into debt by free market reforms

private sector rivals have to follow.

This was a sop to the growing array of logistics companies that accompanied the growth of internet shopping.

They were handed a key advantage over their state-owned rival, and made great use of it.

Unburdened with debt, Amazon and United Parcel Service (UPS) have recorded big profits during the pandemic.

In fact, they've made so much "spare money" they are in the process of

expanding their networks.

Amazon is buying an extra 2,300 trucks, while UPS has announced a £76 million expansion of its Atlanta facility.

## Public

All of this has added to public sector USPS's crisis.

It was unable to make the medical pre funding payments, and so the giant figure ended up as a "debt" on its balance sheet.

And that debt has since been used as a political stick to beat both public

services and workers alike.

In 2000, some 800,000 people worked for USPS. Today that's down to 650,000. A fifth of those work part-time and are more easily sacked.

Since 2007 some 44,000 USPS workers have been sacked after being injured doing their job.

Unions that should have resisted these attacks have repeatedly fallen for the argument that jobs can only be saved by toeing the company line.

Inaccurate claims are the real fraud

**TRUMP claims that "mail-in" voting is more prone to fraud than voting in person. He has even suggested delaying the election to prevent "inaccuracies"—which he doesn't have the power to do.**

But there is no evidence of widespread election fraud according to numerous studies.



## IN BRIEF

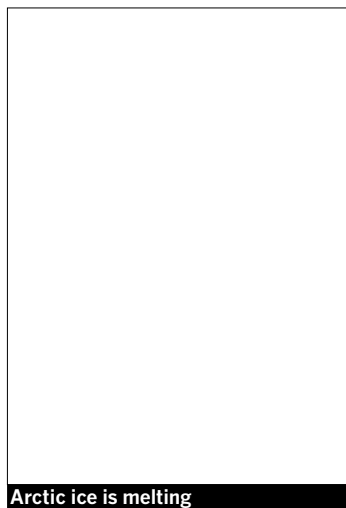
**500 billion tonnes melted**

THE GREENLAND ice sheet lost a record amount of ice in 2019, equivalent to a million tonnes per minute across the year, satellite data shows.

The climate crisis is heating the Arctic at double the rate in lower latitudes. The ice cap is the biggest single contributor to sea level rise, which already imperils coasts around the world. The ice sheet shrank by 532 billion tonnes last year as its surface melted and glaciers fell into the ocean. The amount of melted ice would have filled seven Olympic-sized swimming pools per second.

**Canadian ice shelf breaks up**

A MASSIVE chunk of Canada's last fully intact ice shelf, some 4,000 years old, has broken off. The shelf has been reduced by more than half, scientists



Arctic ice is melting

reported last Sunday.

After separating from the shelf, the piece split in two, forming an iceberg almost the size of Manhattan.

Climate change probably fuelled the collapse of the shelf, researchers said. This summer, the region's temperature was 5 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1980 to 2010 average, according to glaciology professor Luke Copland.

**Massive risk of massif disaster**

ITALIAN AUTHORITIES have evacuated about 75 people, mostly tourists, from an Alpine valley as huge blocks of ice threaten to crash down from a glacier.

Planpincieux glacier, in the Mont Blanc massif, has weakened because of intense summer heat alternating with night-time cold. A local environmental risk expert said the fragile ice could fall at any time.

# California wildfires show need for climate action

by SARAH BATES

**WILDFIRES HAVE caused devastation across northern California with a state of emergency declared across the US state.**

Blazes were merging together and engulfing entire neighbourhoods last Friday, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee. At least six people have died.

The California fire department called the conditions "unprecedented and unseen by veteran firefighters".

Winds are reaching up to 30 miles per hours, causing the fires to spread quickly and unpredictably.

The fires come after a blistering heatwave and over 12,000 lightning strikes.

Vacaville, a city in Solano County, has been particularly badly hit.

"Firefighters couldn't do anything, they just had to watch it burn," said resident Marci Albers, who lost her house in the fire. "I'm in shock. I can't even think straight," she said after evacuating at 2am.

"We had 30 years of stuff in that house."

**Raged**

By Monday, some 200,000 people across California had been told to leave their homes. Some 585 fires have raged through almost 1,000,000 acres across the state—already more than last year.

Officials in Santa Cruz said local shelters were near capacity and that "The scale of existing and anticipated evacuation orders is unprecedented and the need to safely house evacuees is critical."

Firefighters are stretched to the limit trying to contain the blazes.

One family whose home burnt to the ground said a fire chief told them there weren't enough trucks to send one to their neighbourhood.

More than 14,000 firefighters are working, but it's simply not enough to overcome the infernos.

Some workers were even signing on for 72-hour rather than 24-hour shifts.

**Inmates**

A quarter of the state's firefighting force has been made up of inmates, paid as little as £1.50 a day and 76p an hour when they are on a fire.

The disaster comes just as California became the first state to surpass 650,000 Covid-19 cases.

"Not only are we dealing with Covid-19, but with the heat and now the fires," said Cheryl Jarvis.

She was evacuated to a community centre but refused to go inside

for fear of catching coronavirus.

Some residents are staying outside evacuation centres, sleeping in their cars or camping in tents.

It's not an accident that California is suffering from increasingly devastating wildfires—it is a direct result of climate catastrophe.

The journal Earth's Future warned last year that dryer, hotter summers causing the disasters were "the clearest link between California wildfire and anthropogenic climate change".

And what could be the world's hottest ever temperature—54.4 degrees—was recorded in the state's Death Valley last week.

The message is clear—climate catastrophe is here and it's costing lives, our homes and our natural world. Now is the time to take action.

SOME 200,00 people were told to evacuate as homes were destroyed

## Rebel in Manchester, Cardiff and London

EXTINCTION Rebellion (XR) was set to launch the latest phase of its global rebellion on Tuesday of next week.

XR said, "We are at an intersection of global crises. Climate breakdown, Covid-19, racial injustice—all are symptoms of a toxic system that is driving us to extinction, a system built on economic inequality, extraction, the destruction of nature, and exploitation. "We cannot carry on like

this. The system is killing us.

"From the 1st September we will peacefully disrupt the UK Parliament in London, carrying out pressure building actions over two weeks, until they back the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill and prepare for crisis with a National Citizens' Assembly.

"The Rebellion will not just be focused on London though. Rebels will also join us in disruption of Cardiff and Manchester. "These rebellions are open to all!"

For details go to [bit.ly/XRfor2020](https://bit.ly/XRfor2020)

**What's your story?**

Email with your ideas  
[reports@socialistworker.co.uk](mailto:reports@socialistworker.co.uk)

## CIVIL SERVICE

# Tate strikers keep up fight to halt job cuts

**WORKERS AT the Tate galleries in London are continuing their lively strikes.**

They are fighting 313 redundancies which are going ahead despite the galleries expecting to receive a £7 million bailout.

PCS union members want at least 10 percent of the bailout used to save the jobs.

They are also demanding no redundancies while senior executives are paid in excess of £100,000 a year.

A rally last Saturday saw supporters—including Jeremy Corbyn—come to back the action. Managers have used dirty tactics. After the first strike day last week, which saw over 90 percent of rostered staff refuse to go to work, Tate Enterprises bosses tried to break the strike.

An email seen by PCS officials shows the company asking the separate Tate Eats staff to cover strikers' work in the shops. They were offering minimum wage workers the chance for "extra shifts" in the shops before the axe falls and these workers are thrown out of the Tate too.

●For solidarity details go to AgiTate on Facebook

●Donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/TateStrike



WORKERS ARE fighting for their jobs at the Tate

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

■THE MONTH long strike by cleaners at HMRC tax offices in Merseyside is going strong.

PCS union members are fighting outsourcer ISS over low pay and poor working conditions.

A solidarity Zoom rally was planned for 12.30pm on Wednesday this week. Register at bit.ly/Rally4HMRC

●Messages of support to RCGroup@pcs.org.uk

■NEARLY 25,000 workers in the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) in the PCS union are voting in a consultative ballot.

It is for industrial action over plans to lengthen working hours.

Tory ministers want jobcentres and Universal Credit service centres to open until 8pm Monday to Friday from 30 November.

Workers are already being driven to end home working.

Now they also face extended periods of contact with people and other workers during a possible second wave of coronavirus.

DWP bosses can extend opening hours to 8pm under a pay deal wrongly agreed to by the PCS in 2016.

Bosses have to show they need to extend operating hours—and the PCS says there's no evidence for this.

The ballot continues until 7 September.

## AVIATION

## BA workers' mass meeting shows backing for a fight

BRITISH Airways (BA) workers could be moving closer to strikes to defend their jobs, wages and redundancy pay.

Over 1,000 workers held a socially-distanced gathering on Thursday of last week near Heathrow airport.

Around 10,000 workers are set to lose their jobs by September, with the remaining workforce forced on to inferior pay and conditions.

Many workers want their Unite union to begin widespread action against BA.

The airline has forced thousands of workers to accept voluntary redundancies.

But it has since changed the terms of the offer, meaning workers could be thousands of pounds out of pocket.

Workers have been told that if they are employed by BA following redundancies,

they will be placed on unstable zero hours type contracts.

While workers suffer job losses and the loss of up to 43 percent of their pay, management is unaffected by any of the changes to pay and conditions.

Howard Beckett, Unite's assistant general secretary, said, "British Airways is reaping what it has sowed."

"It's systematic, brutal and needless attacks on its workforce will see it inevitably faced with strikes in the autumn along with the persistent threat of disruption through widespread legal action."

"This workforce was absolutely clear today—this fight will go all the way and it will last until BA stops behaving like an abusive Victorian mill owner."

That rhetoric has to be turned into swift and effective action.

## DELIVEROO

## Sheffield Deliveroo revolt

DELIVEROO workers in Sheffield took to the streets on Wednesday last week for a two-hour work stoppage. They are demanding higher pay and an end to unfair sackings.

These workers kept going through the worst of the pandemic. But as Dee Uddin, the chair of the Sheffield branch of the couriers' IWGB union, put it, "The thank you we got was a deduction in pay."

Later, when addressing the crowd of striking Deliveroo workers, he said that he was tired of Deliveroo's contempt for workers and they had to stick together.

When Dee started at Deliveroo, he could earn £100 for an eight-hour shift. Now it would take up to 12 hours to make that same amount.

And they have had to face the pandemic with no sick pay. **Patrick Wakefield**

## GAS WORKERS

## 'Fire and rehire' threat sees anger at British Gas

WORKERS AT Centrica have voted for strikes in a consultative ballot.

The vote was held among 10,000 GMB union members at Centrica-owned British Gas and PH Jones. It saw 95 percent vote in favour of industrial action on a turnout of 68 percent.

This clears the way for a formal strike ballot.

The company has issued threats to "fire and rehire" the workforce.

Centrica announced plans in June to make 5,000 workers redundant and bring in changes to pay and terms and conditions that will disadvantage the majority of their 20,000 workers.

Then last month, the company revealed it intended to fire and rehire the entire workforce if they

didn't accept the changes.

The consultative ballot will be followed by a formal strike ballot in the autumn.

Justin Bowden, GMB national secretary, said, "Centrica bosses are holding a box of matches and threatening to set fire to the terms and conditions of this workforce."

■SOME 98 percent of GMB union members at Northern Gas Networks (NGN) have voted in favour of strikes over pay in a consultative ballot.

Pay talks began before the lockdown, when workers rejected an initial offer from the company.

NGN have now delivered a worse offer, blaming the Covid-19 crisis. An official strike vote will follow.

## UNIVERSITIES

## Strike vote gets results

A UNIVERSITY in Edinburgh has agreed to halt compulsory redundancies after union members voted overwhelmingly to strike.

Edinburgh Napier University had planned to impose job losses on individuals it selected.

But a ballot of Unison union members saw an 84 percent vote for strikes on a 68 percent turnout.

Unison Scotland says the ballot's pressure and potential strikes during freshers' week led to the agreement of a voluntary severance scheme instead.

Lorcan Mullen, Unison Scotland head of higher education, said, "Given the fact that so many Unison members were either working from home, furloughed or on annual leave during the ballot period, it is remarkable that the branch has comprehensively beaten the ballot thresholds mandated by anti-union legislation."

## LGBT+ RIGHTS

## Manchester LGBT+ demo

AROUND 50 people joined a protest in Manchester last Sunday for LGBT+ rights.

The protest was called by a Polish LGBT+ activist living in Britain to express solidarity with LGBT+ people in Poland facing vicious bigotry and repression from its government.

The right wing Polish president Andrzej Duda used homophobia, racism and bigotry to win the election in April. This has emboldened homophobic politicians and far right activists.

Outside the Polish consulate in Manchester, protesters highlighted the case of activist Margot Szutowicz.

Margot has been held for two months awaiting trial for allegedly damaging a van that was carrying anti-LGBT+ propaganda. **Martin Empson**

## OPEN THE BORDERS

## Horror of migrant death

>>>from back page  
the abhorrent criminal gangs and people smugglers who exploit vulnerable people," she said.

"Working together we are determined to stop them." But no people smugglers appear to have been involved.

Charles Devos, head of a Calais rescue service, said the youths were in "a small boat that you can find in supermarkets and that you inflate by mouth".

Labour's shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds said "the situation is lacking in humanity and completely unacceptable".

And in a letter to the home secretary, he asked about legal advice for deploying the Royal Navy to back up the border police in the English Channel.

But nowhere has Labour said that the refugees should have safe and legal

routes into Britain. Instead, Thomas-Symonds said, "The government urgently needs to work on a solution with international partners and address the exploitative behaviour of criminal gangs—this is costing lives."

Even when smugglers are involved, their business depends wholly on Britain, France and the European Union's racist border regime.

If there were safe and legal routes for refugees, they would not be forced to rely on traffickers.

Britain and its international partners are the big-time criminals whose policies create refugees, then condemn them to death.

■RACISM FROM the top encourages the Nazis. Around 500 supporters of a mix of racist and fascist groups assembled in Nottingham last Saturday. They were opposed by 300 anti-fascists.



# STUFF TORIES' NHS PAY INSULT

by TOMÁS TENGELY-EVANS

**HEALTH WORKERS** across Britain planned a series of workplace rallies and demonstrations for pay justice this week.

The protests on Wednesday are part of a grassroots revolt after the Tories excluded NHS staff from public sector pay increases for workers who had made a "vital contribution" during the pandemic.

An angry mood has already seen around 40 protests in towns and cities at the beginning of the month, including a 2,000-strong march in central London.

Workers organising at St Thomas' Hospital, near Downing Street, had invited other hospitals to join their rally.

One worker at an east London NHS trust said she "couldn't have anticipated the mood" among colleagues to join the fight.

The worker described how their pay protest WhatsApp group went from "three people to around 87" in the space of a week.

They had an urgent message for health and care workers everywhere.

"Even if there is just one of you, or you and one other



NHS WORKERS in London marched earlier this month to demand decent pay

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

person who wants to give it a go, you can get going pretty quickly," she said.

Health workers plan a further national day of action for Saturday 12 September.

The Tories say that the NHS is still covered by a three-year pay deal, which will amount to a 6.5 percent increase.

This deal was accepted by

the majority of health unions, apart from the GMB. The leaderships of the two largest unions, Unison and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), helped the government sell

the pay deal in 2018. Many health workers were led to believe they would receive more money in their pay packets than they did.

The RCN leadership was

forced to apologise and step down.

The 2018 deal came on the back of a ten-year pay freeze under Labour and Tory governments, which led to up to a 20 percent pay cut in real terms.

Holly, a nurse in Sheffield, says she felt "anger and frustration" after the Tory decision not to give health workers a pay rise. "Many colleagues are shocked, lots of us aren't," she told Socialist Worker.

"The public support, the 'thank you's', the clapping was all well received and boosted morale especially in the first few weeks.

"However it should not be in place of a pay rise.

"We need a rise not only in recognition for our roles during Covid-19 but to make up for the pay freeze since 2010 and years of austerity in between.

"The pay deal doesn't even cover the rate of inflation."

A victory for the health workers would be a win for all workers, giving them confidence to take on the Tories and bosses.

Every trade unionist, socialist and campaigner should throw themselves behind the NHS pay revolt.

## ASYLUM

## Britain's racist immigration laws drown a young refugee

REFUGEE campaigners slammed the Tory government's "total failure" after a Sudanese man's body was washed up on a beach in northern France last week.

Abdulfatah Hamdallah, aged 22, drowned trying to cross the Channel with another man in an inflatable dinghy using shovels for oars.

He died because Britain's border regime is designed to repel people at any cost.

Stand Up To Racism



Protesting for refugee rights in Swansea last week

and Care4Calais were set to hold a protest outside the Home Office as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

### Protests

It came after several other protests over the weekend, including in Manchester, Lancaster, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea

This death comes as British and French authorities have ramped up repression against refugees.

Abdulfatah was one

of the hundreds of people who have fled war, dictatorship and poverty and who are now trapped at Britain's border in northern France and Belgium.

Clare Moseley is the founder of Care4Calais, which provides aid to refugees who live in makeshift settlements in the area.

"This young man's death starkly demonstrates the total failure of our government to do anything to help these people who

are in such desperate straits," she said.

"Things need to change. We need a way for people's asylum claims to be fairly heard without them having to risk their lives.

"We need this before someone else dies."

Tory home secretary Priti Patel tried to deflect her responsibility for Abdulfatah's death onto people smugglers.

"This horrendous incident serves as a brutal reminder of

>>>Continues on page 19